mission is already conducting oil exploration of the Cuddalore–Pondicherry Coast.

Revision of Pay Scale of Assistants in ICAR

1500. SHRI PHOOL CHAND VERMA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any representations from the Associations of Assistants working in the various institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi for revision of the pay scale to bring at par with the pay scale of the Assistants working in the various Ministries;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government; and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI K.C.LENKA): (a) Sir, Representations from individuals and Joint Staff Councils of ICAR Institutes have been received in this regard.

(b) and (c). Assistants working in some of the ICAR Institutes have filed an application/petition in the Central Administrative Tribunal requesting for adoption of pay scale of Rs. 1640–2900 at par with various Ministries. The matters *sub-judice.*

Increasing the Price of Pepper

1501. SHRI PALK K.M. MATHEW: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Kerala has submitted a proposal to the Union Government for increasing the price of pepper to Rs. 4,000/- per quintal;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the decision taken by the Union Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b). The Union Government has not received any formal proposal from the Govt. of Kerala for fixation of floor prices of pepper or increasing the price of pepper. However, the matter was raised by the Hon'ble Member under Rule 377 regarding fixation of floor price of pepper at Rs. 6000/- per quintal.

(c). Since major part of the production of pepper is exported, its price stabilisation programme will have to be considered taking into consideration both domestic and international prices as well as production and internal demand. Already, prevailing domestic prices of pepper are not very competitive in the international market. Any kind of price support operation would further increase the FOB cost of our pepper, making it further uncompetative and may result in fall in exports.

[*Translation*]

Research Magazines of ICAR

1502. SHRI VINAY KATIYAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of bilingual research magazines being brought out by the ICAR in English and Hindi;

(b) the efforts being made by the ICAR to bring out Hindi edition of research magazines where only English version is brought out; and

(c) the research magazines being